

CHICAGO - Representatives Melissa Bean (IL-08) and Mark Kirk (IL-10) sounded a warning on suburban transit funding Tuesday during a presentation of the 2007 findings of the Suburban Transportation Commission.

Bean said authorities with the Federal Transit Administration are unable to approve federal spending for budgeted projects because the ongoing budget challenges in Springfield have threatened the matching local funds that are required.

“The populations in our suburban districts are booming, offsetting the decline in population in the city,” Bean said. “Illinois jobs and growth are dependent on suburban infrastructure. That’s why Congressman Kirk and I are here today to urge our state leaders to find a workable solution that would provide the necessary matching funds to the federal grants already secured by the Illinois delegation.”

The Federal Transit Administration is withholding approval for a funding agreement with Metra that would pay for preliminary engineering of the planned expansion of service on the Union Pacific Northwest and Union Pacific West lines because the state legislature has not passed a capital funding bill that would provide the necessary matching funds. Without such a capital bill, the FTA will withhold funding and these projects will be delayed indefinitely.

Funds for these Metra projects and vital road projects were included in the 2005 Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFTEA), which set aside \$6.2 billion in funds for Illinois rail and road projects

“The Illinois delegation secured these funds in 2005 because we knew these projects were vital for the suburbs and the region as a whole,” Bean said. “I hope our state leaders can come together in a bipartisan way, as the Congressional delegation did, to find a solution.”

Bean and Kirk, along with state and local leaders, created the bipartisan Suburban Transportation Commission in April 2007. Members include:

- State Sen. Michael Bond
- State Rep. Ed Sullivan Jr.
- Mayor Maria Rodriguez, Village of Long Grove
- Mayor Bill Gentes, Village of Round Lake
- Charlie Eldredge, Executive Director, McHenry County Economic Development Corporation
- Chris Robling, Jayne Thompson and Associates

The founding principles of the Commission are to educate key stakeholders and the public about the changing needs and demographics of the Chicagoland area, as well as develop new ideas for improving transportation opportunities in suburban communities. More than two-thirds of all Chicagoland residents now live in suburban Cook and the Collar Counties.

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